United Nations A/C.2/55/SR.19

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
14 November 2000

Original: English

Second Committee

Summary record of the 19th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 20 October 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Niculescu ..... (Romania)

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00-70036 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 95: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*)

(b) Convention on Biological Diversity (*continued*) (A/55/211)

(c) Water supply and sanitation (*continued*) (A/55/65-E/2000/19)

(d) Further implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*) (A/55/185 and A/C.2/55/3)

(e) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (*continued*) (A/55/331)

(f) Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy, including the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 (*continued*) (A/55/91)

1. **Mr. Maksimychev** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation attached great importance to the implementation of the United Nations conventions on the environment, which demonstrated the contribution of the United Nations in implementing the decisions taken at Rio.

2. Turning to the specific conventions, he said that the Convention on Biological Diversity had helped individual countries to form policies in that area, and he was pleased to note that his Government was preparing to accede to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety which had been adopted in Montreal earlier in the year. Further strengthening of cooperation among that Convention and the other environmental instruments and United Nations agencies dealing with the problems of biodiversity was of the utmost importance, as those problems were cross-sectoral in nature.

3. The Russian Federation considered the Convention on desertification the fundamental international legal instrument governing the fight against desertification and soil degradation on a global scale. The forthcoming regional meeting of Parties in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, would undoubtedly provide impetus for more countries in the region to accede to the Convention. For its part, his Government was attempting to speed up the process domestically. The delay could be attributed to the structural changes which had recently taken place in national environmental bodies.

4. Implementation of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol was among his Government's priorities for action in the environmental sphere. The early establishment of mechanisms for implementation of the Kyoto Protocol would be in the interests of all States and their sustainable economic development. The forthcoming sixth conference of the Parties should lead to a new level of international cooperation, and its success would depend on the willingness of the Parties to consider each other's interests.

5. Finally, his Government also supported the implementation of the World Solar Programme and urged increased cooperation between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Secretariat in that area.

6. **Mr. Avrahamy** (Israel) said that, as a party to the Convention on desertification Israel was deeply committed to sharing its experience with other countries. Ben-Gurion University, located in the heart of Israel's vast Negev Desert had launched an International Programme for Arid Land Crops (IPALAC) with a view to combating poverty among the inhabitants of drylands. IPALAC projects included "Dates for the Sahel", in which Israel cooperated with Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal, and "Trees for Arid Lands", which sought to introduce fruit and multi-purpose trees to Africa's arid lands on a large scale. Core funding for IPALAC had been provided by UNESCO, the Government of Finland, the Government of Israel and Ben-Gurion University.

7. The Jacob Blaustein Institute for Desert Research also located in the Negev, worked with all relevant Israeli and international organizations on programmes for Middle East, Asian, African and Latin American countries affected by desertification. The Centre studied the dryland environment, human settlements in the drylands, dryland resources management and biological production in the drylands. One of its major regional activities was an initiative to control land degradation in the Middle East with the participation of

degradation in the Middle East with the participation of various countries of the region and the World Bank. The initiative included the establishment of regional cooperation mechanisms, the exchange of technology, the application of research findings, training and the identification of investment priorities. In conclusion, his delegation believed that regional cooperation was crucial to combating desertification, and that the desire of inhabitants of drylands to form partnerships with those who were willing to share their knowledge and experience transcended national borders.

8. **Mr. Abreha** (Ethiopia) said that his delegation attached great importance to the Convention on Biological Diversity. In that connection, it welcomed the adoption of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention, based on the precautionary approach contained in principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

9. Despite remarkable efforts to integrate the traditional knowledge and practices of indigenous and local communities in the implementation of the Convention, much remained to be done. For the developing world, particularly in Africa, indigenous and local knowledge and practices were vital to agricultural productivity, food security and environmental protection and took the ecosystem approach to conservation. Since 90 per cent of the world's biological diversity was situated in the territories of indigenous peoples and local communities, it was important to recognize those peoples' rights over their own knowledge, technology, innovations and practices, and their right to participate in decision-making processes related to them. In that connection, the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), which viewed intellectual property rights as private or individual and exclusive, must be harmonized with the Convention on Biological Diversity, which recognized the role and achievements of local and indigenous communities and established collective and community property rights.

10. The communiqué of the Group of African States issued at the 5th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held in Nairobi in May 2000, called for international recognition of the rights of local communities and their knowledge and technologies in order to protect them from piracy. Support must be given to the efforts of the Group of African States, the Like-minded Group and the least developed countries in the World Trade Organization (WTO) to ensure that TRIPS, particularly its article 27.3 (b) prohibited the patenting of life forms, including plants, animals, micro-organisms and biological process, and ensured protection of the innovations of indigenous and local farming communities.

11. His Government had formulated a national action programme to combat desertification, as well as policies to address the problem in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas. Over 40 countries had submitted reports on the implementation of the Convention on desertification, demonstrating the importance they attached to the issue. The international community, particularly the developed countries, must do more to ensure the full implementation of the Convention. His delegation shared the views of the Conference of the Parties that contributions for combating drought and desertification must be clearly differentiated from other official development assistance. Developed countries, international financial institutions and other organizations should also make the necessary contributions to the Convention's Global Mechanism for combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought and accord the Convention a status equal to other conventions. Ways must be found to enable the Convention to benefit from the Global Environment Facility.

12. **Ms. Khan-Cummings** (Trinidad and Tobago) expressed her delegation's full support for the statements made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the representative of Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, respectively. While the programmes of the specialized agencies to implement the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States were encouraging, much remained to be done. The international community must devote priority attention to completing work on a vulnerability index for the small island developing States, as called for in General Assembly resolution 54/224 in the Millennium Declaration. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/55/185), the Committee for Development Policy and the Commonwealth Secretariat were not taking into account the work of regional bodies such as the Caribbean Development Bank, and vice versa, she therefore called for a coordinated and coherent approach to finalizing work on the index (A/55/185, para. 62). Her delegation was concerned at the lack of

progress on funding for more than 300 projects submitted by small island developing States to the meeting of representatives of donors, held in February 1999 and called for a more holistic approach to the financing of those projects. She expressed appreciation, however, for the efforts by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on selected climate change projects and for the funding mechanism established by Norway, Italy, Germany and Japan.

13. Noting the importance of a comprehensive and integrated approach to sustainable development, she expressed appreciation for the assistance of United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Alliance of Small Island States, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility in organizing the Second Workshop on Climate Change, Negotiations, Management and Strategy, held in Apia, Samoa, (A/C.2/55/3) and looked forward to the workshop on energy issues to be held in Cyprus in early 2001.

14. Trinidad and Tobago was determined to fulfil it commitments under the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and was accelerating efforts to integrate the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainable development in its national programmes and projects. Her Government was focusing on the sustainable management of its renewable and non-renewable resources and making every effort to increase the involvement of the private sector, including non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, in its sustainable development programmes. Every company in Trinidad and Tobago was required to contribute to the Green Fund included in the national budget for 2001. Funds were being allocated to environmental non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and other elements of civil society with a view to fostering a culture of sustainable development, and workshops and seminars were being organized to sensitize the private sector to major environmental issues.

15. **Mr. Sieber** (Observer for Switzerland) said that his delegation had played a key role in the negotiation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which it had signed in May during the 5th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, held in Nairobi. All necessary measures must be taken to ensure the rapid implementation — in any case not later that 2002 — of that pioneering instrument, which highlighted the precautionary principle, established linkages between environment-related and trade agreements and promoted technical and institutional capacity-building to ensure the environmental safety of biotechnology. His delegation hoped that the General Assembly would appeal to States to sign and ratify the Protocol at the earliest possible date.

16. At the meeting of the Conference of the Parties, his delegation had submitted draft voluntary guidelines on promoting access to genetic resources and the sharing of their benefits, to be examined at the meeting of the Conference of the Parties to be held in 2002. His delegation also supported optimal synergy among activities under various international instruments and would be making specific proposals in that regard.

17. Switzerland had contributed over SwF 4 million to finance desertification and drought activities since the entry into force of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and $59 million in bilateral assistance in the period from 1997 to 2000. His delegation welcomed the nearly universal recognition of the Convention and hoped that States parties would integrate its principles in their national policies and programmes and in the new initiatives to be outlined by the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties. In conclusion, he appealed for enhanced coordination of the activities of the United Nations system in the field of environment and development and greater coherence among the various environment-related forums and instruments. It was to be hoped that the establishment of an environmental management group would contribute to that end.

18. **Mr. Popov** (Belarus) said that Belarus was faithfully carrying out the provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity through its national plan and strategy was initiating the relevant national procedures preparatory to signing the Cartagena Protocol. His Government had adopted legislation on, inter alia, environmental protection, production and consumption patterns, the designation of specially protected natural areas and sites and the protection of wildlife and forests. Draft legislation on the protection of plant life was being considered. Belarus had signed the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, Especially as Waterfowl Habitat, and intended to accede to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. The environmental organs and scientific institutions of

Belarus were redoubling their efforts to preserve the country's biodiversity, and the size of protected areas was to be significantly increased under a national ecological programme. A national programme to protect and monitor forest resources was also being designed.

19. The most serious problem confronting Belarus was the vast area (25 per cent of its national territory) which had been subjected to radioactive pollution during the Chernobyl disaster. The impact of the disaster on flora and fauna was impossible to assess on the basis of currently available data. Belarusian scientists had identified changes in molecular and cell levels which could lead to large-scale biochemical mutations in the future and affect the development of populations and ecosystems. Additional time and resources would be needed in order to formulate specific recommendations for the preservation and use of biological resources in the affected areas.

20. Due to a shortage of financial and material resources, Belarus was having difficulty implementing its environmental programmes; a significant portion of the national budget was used to eliminate and mitigate the impact of the Chernobyl disaster. He hoped that the international community would take into account the demonstrated and sincere will of Belarus to implement the environment-related conventions and the difficulties it was grappling with as an economy in transition.

21. Belarus had participated actively in international efforts to combat land degradation. Although its territory was located in a sufficiently humid zone, drought-related land degradation and adverse changes in its landscape loomed as a genuine threat, owing to global climate changes in recent decades and anthropogenic factors such as the destruction of land and the natural vegetation cover, water depletion and urbanization. The rational use and monitoring of land exposed to desertification and degradation would be vital to the country's economic, social and ecological development. Belarus was drafting a national programme of action in that area.

22. Belarus was contemplating acceding to the Convention on desertification, pending the adoption of annex V. It had already established sound working relations with the secretariat of the Convention, to which it had submitted proposals on national requirements in that sphere. In the meantime, its work would be firmly guided by the spirit and principles of that instrument.

23. **Ms. Von Lilien-Waldau** (International Fund for Agricultural Development), speaking on behalf of the Managing Director of the Global Mechanism of the Convention to Combat Desertification, said that the Global Mechanism could best be described as a partnership builder or interface between resource needs and resources available. The problem of land degradation and desertification was closely linked to the development process itself, in particular, rural and agricultural development, poverty eradication and sustainable development as a whole.

24. In order to address land degradation issues properly, Government technical ministries in such areas as agriculture, livestock, water and rural development must be involved. Because the financing and implementation of the Convention was linked to more efficient and effective use of existing financial mechanisms, it was also absolutely necessary to involve ministries of planning and finance in the process at an early stage to facilitate mainstreaming of Convention objectives into the regular planning and budgetary processes. One of the main tasks of the Global Mechanism, therefore, was to contribute to the mainstreaming of the Convention.

25. Practical experience had shown that the interventions of the Global Mechanism had a multiplier effect, whereby its resources served as a catalyst to mobilize other grants and funding. As to the resources available to the Global Mechanism it had received contributions from IFAD, the World Bank and the Governments of Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark and Japan. The Conference of the Parties had also requested the Global Mechanism, in cooperation with the Secretariat, to organize five regional and subregional workshops on resource mobilization.

26. Among initiatives of the Global Mechanism in support of the implementation of the Convention was the Niger/Nigeria shared water programme, in cooperation with UNEP, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the concerned Governments. A joint project of Mali, Tunisia and China was another example of the "matchmaking" which the Mechanism facilitated.

27. **Mr. Hamad** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that, in the context of the ongoing reform process, UNESCO was refocusing its activities into five high-priority fields, one of which was water resource research. The critical situation of freshwater had increasingly imposed itself as a key international concern. Worldwide action would be needed to avert the impending crisis, and the Commission on Sustainable Development had requested the United Nations system to establish a regular assessment of the world water situation.

28. Accordingly, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) had launched a programme on freshwater resources assessment leading to a biennial world water development report, and UNESCO had volunteered to host the secretariat for the programme. It would be funded with assistance from extra-budgetary resources and trust funds and run as a system-wide initiative under the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources.

29. One area demanding immediate action was freshwater resources education. Therefore, the Director-General had begun a project with the Government of the Netherlands to create a global UNESCO institute for water education in Delft as a centre of excellence in water resources education.

30. The Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP) established in 1975 was the pillar for UNESCO's role in the field of water resources. Central to its mandate was the building of national capacity to assess, monitor and manage freshwater resources. IHP was planning the sixth phase of its programme (2002-2007) around the theme "Water Interactions: Systems at Risk and Social Challenges".

31. **Mr. Yauvoli** (Fiji) welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/55/185). Sustainable development called for resources to be directed where they were most needed, so that current development needs did not compromise those of future generations. That was difficult in his country's situation, however, as resources were scarce, and the development process would ultimately result in a legacy of depleted resources and debt to future generations. The situation was compounded by Fiji's isolation, narrow export base and vulnerability to shocks such as drought or cyclones.

32. His delegation acknowledged the concerted efforts to advance the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. One issue worth stressing was the vulnerability index proposed in General Assembly resolution 54/224. Work on that index should be completed as soon as possible, in order to reflect fully the plight of small island developing States. Until it was completed, individual small island developing States such as Maldives, Samoa and Vanuatu should continue to be regarded as least developed countries.

33. **Mr. Jokonya** (Zimbabwe) said that the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 had been better integrated into efforts towards sustainable development, as an increasing role for renewable energy was considered important for the future. In developing countries, however, transfer of technology and capacity-building were needed to achieve that objective, as realizing the enormous potential of renewable energy technologies required significant research and development and long-term market expansion.

34. More efforts were needed to support the wider use of solar energy in rural areas. Experience with solar home systems in Zimbabwe had been very encouraging, and local communities should be supported financially to enable them to participate in such projects. In the view of his delegation, the technology transfer component of the Global Environment Facility should be strengthened. UNEP was introducing a programme that would aid in the creation of small private sector energy companies in Africa based on renewable energy technologies, and UNESCO efforts in renewable energy training were highly appreciated.

35. The 75 per cent of humanity living in developing countries accounted for only 25 per cent of global energy consumption. More than a billion people had no sources of energy available to them other than the traditional fuel wood and other forms of biomass. The cornerstone of the policy to promote renewable energy was conservation of finite fossil fuel resources and exploitation of abundant natural, non-depletable solar, wind and biomass resources. Such a path was environmentally benign, allowed equitable use of resources and was sustainable.

36. **Mr. Zvachula** (Micronesia) said that all countries must approach the crucial problems of the environment with a far greater degree of commitment to timely progress than currently existed. Appeals for a new commitment and for political will had been made for years but rarely heeded.

37. Preservation of the ocean and of marine biological diversity was critical, particularly for the people of Micronesia. Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action remained the basic guidelines for protecting the environment and achieving sustainable development.

38. His Government was committed to the achievement of a successful outcome to the next session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The "clean development" mechanism promised to be a useful tool in enabling island countries to play their part in combating climate change and to adapt to its consequences according to their own national circumstances. The Kyoto Protocol should come into force at the earliest possible date, and all countries should be encouraged to sign and ratify it. It was tragic that prevention alone was no longer sufficient and that countries were now having to adapt to climate change while those responsible for it would be the ones least affected by it.

39. **Mr. Zayts** (Ukraine) asserted that the eight years since the Rio Conference had clearly shown that acquiring the instruments of sustainable development outlined in Agenda 21 was complex from the scientific and methodological standpoint as well as the practical. The forthcoming 10-year review process should not only concentrate on assessing implementation of the decisions made in Rio but also focus attention on identifying ways of implementing Agenda 21 more effectively in the light of current developments in globalization and information technology.

40. Ukraine was completing the process of formulating a State policy for the protection of the environment and the rational use of natural resources based on the concept of sustainable development, and very much appreciated the scientific and technical, as well as financial, assistance of the international community, notably the Global Environment Fund.

41. The consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station had been planetary in scale, so Ukraine was well aware of the dangers entailed in the irrational use of natural resources in new technologies. His country had been grateful for the invaluable assistance of the international community in overcoming the consequences of the accident and turning the power station into an environmentally safe system. The decision had been taken to close it on 15 December 2000, and Ukraine would be submitting a draft resolution to declare that day an International Day to Combat Technogenetic Disasters.

42. Ukraine called on the countries of Europe to make every effort to ensure that the Fifth Ministerial Conference on the "environment for Europe" process, to be held in Kiev, helped to consolidate the pan-European environment process and made a substantial contribution to the development of an environmental strategy for the region. The Conference should concentrate on the state of the environment in Europe and the linkages between the environment, transport and health, water supply problems, energy and resource savings, and the preservation of biological and landscape diversity. It was important for the Conference to discuss ways of improving the mechanisms for implementing existing conventions, and it should consider questions of drafting and adopting new treaty instruments to strengthen subregional cooperation, such as the Carpathian Convention.

43. Ukraine attached great significance to securing biological diversity and halting soil degradation. A national programme had been drawn up to create a network of environmental corridors, which would become an important element in the pan-European system. Agricultural reforms would enable more money to be spent in the coming years on restoring degraded soils.

44. **Ms. Bose** (India) said that in January 2000 her country had adopted a national policy and action strategy on biological diversity after consultation with all stakeholders with the aim of providing a framework for preparing detailed action programmes at the micro-level on the sustainable use of biological diversity. In the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity, India believed that one of the issues that needed to be addressed urgently related to the development of proprietary patents based on traditional knowledge of indigenous communities without obtaining the prior informed consent of the developing countries concerned and without coming to any agreement on benefit-sharing with them. There was a clear and

pressing need to extend effective protection to knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous communities, developed over millennia, in order to ensure that benefits flowed back from patentees to original developers. India was in the process of completing its domestic procedures for signing the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

45. India attached great importance to the Convention on desertification in Africa, but was concerned about the financial constraints hampering its effective implementation and called upon the international community to make the requisite financial resources available.

46. It was estimated that, at the present rate of consumption, the world would run out of conventional sources of energy well before the end of the millennium. India had initiated research and development with a view to harnessing new and renewable sources of energy and had achieved significant progress through national programmes in a number of energy sectors. Public awareness regarding the benefits of renewable energy had been consciously promoted. By December 1999 renewable energy represented a little over 1.5 per cent of India's total installed generating capacity, and it was hoped that by 2012 nearly 10 per cent of that capacity would be based on renewable sources.

47. As a country with a long coastline and more than 5,000 islands, India attached the highest importance to implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and to the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly. Its approach to the sustainable development of its small islands had involved programmes for the maintenance, regeneration and restoration of the ecosystem, with the objective of restoring productive potential, providing employment to local communities and maintaining and promoting ecological balance. It had found that decentralization and full involvement by local communities was the most effective way of sustaining that process and had decided to devote a substantial part of its technical cooperation programmes to small island developing States, which had special problems and needs.

48. **Mr. Balarezo** (Peru) said that the 10-year review process should not renegotiate commitments which had already been made with great difficulty; it should rather be the occasion to give a new political impetus to the process, critically analysing the reasons why the objectives of Agenda 21 had not been fully met and complementing it with new modalities that would strengthen international cooperation. The fact that the social, economic, environmental and cultural dimensions of sustainable development were still far from having been resolved was due largely to the inadequacy of international financial resources and of the transfer of clean and appropriate technologies.

49. It was a matter of urgency that action and decisions be taken that would make it possible rapidly to implement the Kyoto Protocol and the "clean development" mechanism, taking account of the importance of technology transfer and international efforts that gave priority to reduction of greenhouse gases. It was also important to design new financial mechanisms and increase the resources of the Global Environment Fund.

50. Peru considered that the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety was a fundamental instrument. It also welcomed the recent decision by the Economic and Social Council to create the United Nations Forum on Forests with universal participation, and hoped to work seriously and constructively on its programme of work in order to resolve certain outstanding matters including equitable access to markets and elimination of technical barriers to trade.

51. Adequate safe water supply, sanitation and the treatment of solid and liquid wastes were areas of growing concern because of the depletion of sources, rapid urbanization and the effects on the environment, health and economic competitiveness of the country. Peru considered that those areas of concern should be an important part of future discussions, and that it was important to use methodologies employing result indicators based on water quality. The United Nations system could prioritize programmes and projects that would help countries comply with objectives in those areas.

52. **Ms. Girtel** (Canada) said that the Economic and Social Council had recently taken a crucial decision in establishing the United Nations Forum on Forests. Throughout the deliberations leading up to that decision there had been agreement that the Forum should focus on facilitating and promoting implementation of the proposals of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests and those of its predecessor, the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests.

Canada believed that national progress reports on implementing those proposals were fundamental to the Forum's success. More important for the longer term would be working out the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework and devising approaches for appropriate financial and technology transfer support for sustainable forest management. Canada believed that a strong, legally binding agreement on forests was the best way to create and channel the necessary political will.

53. Canada also attached great importance to achieving a strong and effective convention on persistent organic pollutants, to which the key would be financing. But it had already announced that it was establishing a trust fund at the World Bank to help developing countries and countries with economies in transition with capacity-building needed to implement commitments under such a convention, and hoped that other developed countries could make similar announcements.

54. Canada was committed to early action on climate change and had recently announced an action plan on the subject. The forthcoming 6th meeting of the Conference of the Parties would be critical. It also attached particular importance to the protection of the marine environment, and welcomed the results of the 1st meeting of the United Nations open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea.

55. Canada considered that it was important and urgent to draw up viable options to strengthen world environmental governance, with particular emphasis on coherence between institutions, effective conformity mechanisms for the agreements, coordination of the activities of Conventions and capacity-building to facilitate their implementation.

56. **Mr. Koech** (Kenya) said that the review of the implementation of Agenda 21 should result in greater political commitment for better management of global biological resources. Kenya had a rich diversity of indigenous knowledge and associated traditional systems, with great potential for contributing to the sustainable utilization and conservation of biodiversity. Its immediate development problem was the need to reduce poverty, habitat destruction, unregulated exploitation of biological resources and pollution.

57. Substantial investments were required to address those challenges, and stakeholder groups from all sectors of society should be involved in drawing up plans and finding funds for their implementation. His delegation requested the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to assist developing countries to enhance their national capacities in biotechnology in priority areas.

58. The African continent was one of two regions in the world facing serious water shortages. In order to fight disease, which had been identified as one of the three main obstacles to Kenya's development, the Government had instituted water supply and sanitation programmes in various parts of the country. The National Water Master Plan, launched in 1974, aimed to ensure potable water supplies for all households by the year 2000. Unfortunately progress had been minimal because of economic difficulties and erratic weather conditions.

59. The Convention on desertification had benefited the least from multilateral financing and was not in the financing portfolio of the Global Environment Facility. The problem of desertification in the African continent needed urgent attention from the international community. Funding was needed from the Global Environment Fund, without it being tied to the traditional thematic areas funded by the Global Environment Facility. Accordingly, he welcomed the statement of support for that Convention made on the previous day by the representative of the United States.

60. Kenya associated itself with the Abuja Declaration of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) on that issue, and thanked UNEP for its efforts.

61. Turning to the issue of new and renewable sources of energy, he said that his Government had supported the development of renewable sources of energy, by waiving import duties and value-added tax on wind, diesel and solar-powered generation. Solar energy was becoming a popular alternative source of energy, especially in the rural areas. The Government had begun to develop standards on renewable energy products, systems and technologies. Renewable energy was expected to become mainstream, once the legal and institutional frameworks were in place.

62. In conclusion, he commended the GEF for assisting Kenya with its photovoltaic initiative; further support in that area would be welcomed.

63. **Mr. Kumalo** (South Africa) said that one of the important principles contained in the Rio Declaration was the need to eradicate extreme poverty in order to achieve sustainable development. However, unless there was greater political will and a higher level of funding devoted to the achievement of that goal, sustainable development would remain a dream for many developing countries. He therefore called for greater cooperation and partnerships between the North and the South, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

64. The Convention on desertification was of major importance to his country and to the African continent as a whole. Almost half of South Africa was threatened by desertification, and recurrent droughts were a permanent fact of life. Governments, in particular developed country partners, must fulfil their voluntary contributions to the Global Mechanism. At the same time the recent devastating floods in southern Africa, particularly Mozambique, was a reminder of how vulnerable the African continent was to climate change. He therefore called on the parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change to finalize the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and the outstanding elements of the Kyoto Protocol.

65. South Africa was an active member of the World Solar Commission. The national White Paper on Energy Policy supported the development of renewable energy technologies and promoted them in accordance with the World Solar Programme.

66. His delegation was concerned at the increasing and irreversible loss of genes, species and ecosystems across the globe. Species extinction had profound implications for economic and social development, as nearly half of the world's economy, and 80 per cent of the needs of the poor were derived from biological resources. South Africa was the third most biologically diverse country in the world, and was actively involved in all the activities relating to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

67. His delegation welcomed the initiatives for the future implementation of the Programme of Action for the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States. Those initiatives would require substantial financial resources, the political will of Governments and the support of the relevant multilateral institutions.

68. South Africa shared the commitment of other nations to undertake legal, regulatory and institutional reforms for the effective management of water resources. A clear policy framework for water supply and sanitation as part of a broader integrated land and water resource management strategy remained a high priority.

69. He welcomed the decision to turn the tenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development into an open-ended preparatory committee for the 10-year review process. The 2002 event should reactivate the international community's support for sustainable development and sustained economic growth and confirm the priorities and emerging issues to be focused on during the next 10-year programme; the letter should be focused, implementable, measurable and achievable within that time-frame.

70. **Ms. Bai Yongjie** (China) said that although the Convention on Biological Diversity had been in effect for some time, biological diversity in the world was still being destroyed by human activities at unprecedented rates. The adoption of the Protocol on Biosafety had been a significant achievement, and Parties to the Convention should sign and ratify it as soon as possible. The developed countries and the relevant international organizations should support and assist the developing countries in their efforts to implement the Protocol. Her Government had done a great deal of work relating to the protection of biodiversity. It had formally signed the Protocol a few months previously, and was working on regulations on biological safety.

71. Effective implementation would be the key to the success of the Convention on desertification. It was only through increased efforts by the international community, particularly by addressing the issue of financial resources and technology transfer, that the situation could be improved. Domestic ratification processes should be accelerated so that the Convention would obtain a greater degree of universality and financial backing. The Global Mechanism established by the Convention should begin its substantive operations as early as possible

72. At present, over a billion people in the world did not have a safe water supply. Governments should formulate water supply and sanitation development goals and strategies in the light of their countries'

specific circumstances and grant them priority status in their overall development strategies. The international community should provide more assistance, focusing on assisting developing countries to construct and develop water supply and sewage treatment and recycling facilities, as well as developing their human resources and capacities for planning and management.

73. Her delegation appreciated the efforts being made by the United Nations to achieve the goal of universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, and welcomed the strengthened inter-agency coordination with a view to promoting the sustainable management of fresh water. China supported the launching of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, as well as the proposal to proclaim 2003 the International Year of Freshwater.

74. The conflict between the need to produce energy and the need to protect the environment was becoming more acute. The relationship between development, energy and environment had become an important global issue. His delegation was happy to see that various specialized agencies were making great efforts to help the developing countries develop new and renewable energies. The World Solar Programme 1996-2005 had met with positive responses and had been implemented in a number of regions and countries.

75. At present, the lack of financial resources and technology was hampering the efforts of developing countries to develop new and renewable energy. The international community, especially the developed countries, should provide financial assistance, an exchange of experience and the transfer of technologies for that purpose. The United Nations should promote the establishment of an effective mechanism for international cooperation and step up its assistance to promote new and renewable energy in developing countries.

76. **Ms. Georgieva** (World Bank) said that the World Bank was preparing to launch a new strategy on the environment. The challenges were clear, and the environmental threats were unprecedented: an increase in the global population of two billion over the next quarter of a century; scarcity of water; degradation of agricultural land; deforestation; overexploitation of marine fisheries; and the threat of annihilation of small island nations by rising sea levels due to climate change.

77. Looking ahead to the next few decades, there was reason to worry, but also reason to hope. Global public awareness of environmental issues was growing, knowledge was increasing and a new working partnership involving government, business and civil society was emerging for the promotion of sustainable development. The World Bank recognized the need to take a fresh look at sustainable development in a rapidly changing and globally interdependent world. A new environmental strategy was being prepared in order to better align work on environmental issues with its central mission of poverty alleviation. The new environment strategy recognized the close links between sustainable development, the environment and poverty reduction, and would focus on improving people's health, enhancing poor people's livelihoods and reducing vulnerability to environmental risks. It built on the experiences gained over the past decade.

78. While the World Bank's environmental work dealt with issues at a national level, it also promoted international environmental policy dialogue on global issues, helped raise awareness and build consensus.

79. There had been two new initiatives to protect the global environment. The Prototype Carbon Fund was the world's first market-based mechanism to address climate change and promote the transfer of finance and climate-friendly technology to developing countries. The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund was a partnership between the Bank, Conservation International and GEF which aimed to better safeguard the threatened biodiversity hotspots in developing countries.

80. The Bank had lent four billion dollars for forestry and forest-related projects since 1991. It was also one of the largest financiers of activities tackling desertification and land degradation, with a total dryland investment portfolio of 18 billion dollars for the period 1990-1998. It also provided between two billion and three billion dollars each year for investments in water in developing countries. Over the past decade it had been involved in more than 20 full-sized renewable energy projects.

81. Since the Rio Conference, new environmental policies and institutions were in place in many countries and the international community was better equipped to assess and address environmental constraints. However, aggressive action was needed to turn concepts and plans into reality. Basic assumptions

United Nations A/C.2/55/SR.20

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
8 December 2000
English
Original: Spanish

Second Committee

Summary record of the 20th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 20 October 2000, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Niculescu ..... (Romania)

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00-70094 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

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Agenda item 118: Programme planning

Consideration of the medium-term plan for the period 2000-2005 (A/55/6, A/55/16, A/C.2/55/5)

1. **Mr. Shihab** (Maldives) said that on numerous occasions, his country had stressed the importance of the timely implementation of the outcome of the Earth Summit, especially Agenda 21 and subsequent measures, including the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. It was profoundly disappointed, therefore, at the scant progress in that direction. When the Barbados Programme of Action had been adopted by the international community, the small island developing States had been elated, because it promised them support in meeting many of their sustainable development challenges. However, the pace of its execution had been very slow. Although the small island developing States had made extensive efforts to fulfil their own commitments under the Programme of Action, most of the developed countries continued to ignore their critical needs. In fact, development assistance had declined at a time when it was most needed and the international community had been less than responsive to efforts at capacity-building, access to existing technologies and the need to develop new ones appropriate to the special needs of those States.

2. It was no longer possible to ignore the damage to national economies and ecosystems caused by such climatic phenomena as El Niño. Maldives was experiencing the adverse effects of coral bleaching, which was destroying its own reef system and those in many other parts of the world. Its beaches were being eroded, while saltwater intrusion endangered the viability of settlements on many of its islands. In countries which depended on marine resources and tourism, the destruction of the natural habitat would surely be disastrous, and unfortunately, there was little those countries could do about it on their own. The international community did not seem to comprehend that the small island developing States were the first victims of unsustainable and destructive exploitation of the world's fragile environment by countries far away from them. His delegation reiterated the same sentiments expressed at the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly, cautioning the international community of the consequences of inaction.

3. At the Millennium Summit, the President of Maldives had addressed the need to develop a vulnerability index that truly captured the unique features of those States. His delegation was delighted that the Millennium Declaration called upon the international community to expedite the early ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and hoped that it would come into force by 2002, the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It hoped that the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change would address clean development mechanisms and would be able to agree on specific measures.

4. Maldives, along with other small island developing States, would continue its efforts to promote sustainable development and protect the environment at the national, regional and international levels in the hope that the international community would hear their voices.

5. **Mr. Swe** (Myanmar) said that his delegation fully associated itself with the statement of Nigeria on behalf

of the Group of 77 and China. It welcomed the adoption of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which had been signed by 68 out of 177 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Protocol was an important step for biosafety, especially transboundary movement of any living modified organism resulting from modern biotechnology that could have an adverse effect on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The Cartagena Protocol offered many developing countries an opportunity for access to information technology, thus contributing to the implementation of Chapter 16 of Agenda 21. For that reason, Myanmar was giving serious consideration to signing the Protocol.

6. As a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Myanmar attached great importance to the preservation of its diverse flora and fauna; it had about 7,000 species of plants, over 1,000 species of birds, more than 300 species of mammals and over 400 species of reptiles and amphibians, including endangered species. The 1992 Forest Law provided adequate coverage for the conservation of forests and biodiversity, and in addition, the 1994 Protection of Wildlife, Wild Plants and Conservation of Natural Areas Law focused on the protection of wildlife and ecosystems in accordance with the guidelines of international conventions.

7. Desertification was a phenomenon which was worsening, affecting some one billion people and 30 per cent of the Earth's total surface area. Without immediate action, desertification would become a major global crisis of the twenty-first century. The Convention to Combat Desertification should receive the same treatment as the other environmental conventions. His delegation hoped that the forthcoming session of the Conference of the Parties would provide an opportunity to take stock of the implementation of the Convention in arresting the spread of desertification and to consider further efforts in that field. His delegation commended the activities of the Global Mechanism in mobilizing the necessary financial resources for the implementation of the Convention. It called on Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to contribute to the strengthening of the Mechanism.

8. Myanmar's efforts in combating desertification were based on preventive measures for lands which were not yet degraded or only slightly affected. One of the major tools was extensive reforestation, which allowed soils to retain moisture. Another initiative was the "Greening Project" for the critical districts of the arid zone of central Myanmar, which included a reforestation scheme which had raised a total of 53,200 acres of fuelwood plantations. The programme was multi-sectoral, grassroots oriented and framed within a context of long-term environmental sustainability. National action, complemented by international cooperation, would surely contribute to the preservation and protection of the environment for future generations.

9. **Mr. Slade** (Samoa), speaking on behalf of the 37 member countries of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), said that they associated themselves fully with the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Inadequate attention to the environment had had serious and substantial repercussions the world over on people's health and livelihoods, in particular those of the poorest and most vulnerable: women and children. Economic and social development and environmental protection were inextricably linked. For development to be sustainable, communities must set priorities, as environmental protection must aim to serve in real and practical ways people who were already at risk, especially the poor and the most vulnerable. The Millennium Summit had served to reconfirm support for the principles set out in Agenda 21, and the international community must now turn seriously to its implementation, fashion a programme of specific measures to respond to the challenges in the report of the Secretary-General's entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century" (A/54/2000*) and translate into action the declaration issued at the Summit. In that sense, the ten-year review of the Rio Conference must not merely take stock, but must engage in the practical and progressive implementation of Agenda 21. It was necessary to find a vision for the future to capture the attention of all sectors of society, and above all young people. In more concrete terms, it was necessary to support the Secretary-General's proposal that the preparatory process for the review should start at the tenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and that the emphasis should be on substantive preparations at the local, national and regional levels.

10. Although the extinction of the species was a natural part of the evolutionary process, other factors had rendered the biological diversity of island

countries more threatened and vulnerable than ever before. Small island developing States were more prone to natural disasters and more vulnerable to the effects of climate variability. In addition, human activities had contributed to the degradation of biological resources. Over the years, the conservation of biological diversity had ceased to be viewed merely in terms of protecting threatened species or ecosystems; it had instead proven to be a fundamental part of sustainable development. In that regard, the States members of AOSIS were grateful for the report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Those States had gained much from being parties to the Convention. For many of them, the process of consultation for the national communications set out in the Convention had resulted in community-based activities, such as the creation of local conservation areas. The Secretariats of the Convention and the Global Environment Facility were to be commended for the support they had given to regional and national institutions in AOSIS countries.

11. The Alliance welcomed the completion of the negotiations on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and looked forward with interest to the first meeting to be held under its terms. It was planning a preparatory workshop to make its membership more aware of the implications of the adoption of the Protocol and of the need to adopt national legislation to give effect to it. It was also important that they should contribute to the development of a proposal for regional capacity-building for the coordination of regional biosafety activities. The Alliance was grateful to the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis for hosting the workshop, and to donor Governments and United Nations agencies for their contributions and support.

12. Concerning the Programme of Action adopted in Barbados, it was clear that the time had come to step up its implementation at the international level. The members of AOSIS would, of course, have to do their part, but all partners should foster an enabling environment, live up to their commitments and adopt new measures to support the small island developing States. The traditional means of development and trade support would have to be changed so as to take into account the special vulnerabilities of the States members of the Alliance. While the vulnerability index was improving, albeit slowly, the General Assembly had time and again acknowledged the constraints confronting the small island developing States, which faced direct and specific disadvantages such as an inability to gain from economies of scale, dependence on remote and shrinking markets, the high cost of energy, transportation and communication and a fragile natural environment with little resilience to natural disasters. It was therefore absolutely crucial to the success of the Barbados Programme of Action to be able to count on the contributions of donors and international partners. In addition, it was necessary that the small island developing States themselves should work more concertedly especially in the areas of capacity-building and the strengthening of their institutions in the long term. In that connection, AOSIS, was planning to hold a workshop on trade, the environment and small island developing States in 2001, and would welcome support for that endeavour. The United Nations system had not given sufficient attention to trade-related matters, and further efforts were required. The Alliance therefore proposed that the trade support provided to its member States at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the unit dealing with those States should be strengthened and be made available to their missions in New York on a more regular basis.

13. There was a critical linkage between energy and sustainable development in all small island States, especially in connection with transport, tourism and rural development. In terms of energy requirements there was clearly a need for the delivery of technologies that were relevant to the circumstances and needs of island States. A matter of particular urgency and importance for the countries of the Alliance was the need to maintain the environmental integrity of international agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol. The Alliance considered that there was a significant market potential for renewable sources of energy and related technologies not only for AOSIS countries but for all developing countries. The Committee's discussions should therefore focus on the adoption of energy efficient policies and projects and the development of renewable sources of energy. That would help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the amount of foreign exchange spent on imports of fossil fuels, and would thereby increase the amount available for national economic development, assisting developing countries in achieving sustainable development. In respect of the Kyoto Protocol negotiations, the principal aim of the AOSIS delegations was to ensure that the Protocol would not result in higher global emissions than would have been

the case if the flexible mechanisms had not been included. The Kyoto Protocol should not be used as a mechanism for the Parties mentioned in Annex I to transfer outmoded or environmentally hazardous technologies. It was therefore necessary to ensure, within the framework of the international debate on sustainable development, that priorities were established with respect to certain kinds of technologies and that those that were environmentally unsound or that did not provide long-term sustainable development benefits were excluded. Detailed discussions on the important issue of energy would be of the utmost interest at the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The AOSIS countries would hold a workshop in Cyprus in 2001, and wished to express their gratitude to the Government of Cyprus for its generosity, and to the donor countries and international agencies whose support would make that event possible.

14. The three Conventions that had resulted from the Rio Conference could create conditions conducive to the adoption of an integrated approach to their implementation. That approach must emphasize the role of capacity-building. The Alliance acknowledged the work done by the Global Environment Facility together with the Secretariats of the Conventions in that regard.

15. The information system on the overall situation of drought and desertification in AOSIS States was still in its early stages. In many regions an assessment of problems and needs was under way, and it was expected that the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertfication would soon gain momentum. The States members of the Alliance were looking forward to the next Conference of the Parties, to be held in Bonn later in 2000.

16. The countries of AOSIS had actively taken part in some of the informal consultations held since the thirteenth session of the subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Before the sixth Conference of the Parties, the prime concern of the AOSIS countries was that the voices of the countries most vulnerable to climate change should be heard, since they were the ones with the most to lose. World-renowned scientists working with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had acknowledged that, unless concerted action was taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the world would undergo unprecedented climatic changes and extreme events; that was a matter of the utmost concern to members of the Alliance because they might not be able to survive such changes. International negotiations must result in an agreement on specific objectives for emission reduction so as to reduce the increasingly dangerous carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere.

17. Another matter of particular importance was adaptation to climate change. Since climate change was inevitable, it was necessary to be as prepared as possible to deal with it. The Parties to the Convention must therefore formulate a series of firm guidelines for the Global Environment Facility so that it could begin studying the more advanced phases of adaptation, independent of some of the considerations that had seemed to hold up discussions on that issue.

18. **Mr. Seki** (Japan) said that his country was actively carrying out its commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity through a range of programmes and policies. The adoption of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety had been a highly valuable step. His country had signed the Protocol at the Fifth Conference of the Parties and was providing substantial financial support for activities undertaken under the Convention, as well as extending technical assistance through the dispatch of experts in various areas related to biodiversity.

19. If headway was to be made on the subject of desertification it was imperative to ensure cooperative action by the international community. His country had contributed a total of $7.7 million over the past seven years in support of the activities of the Convention to Combat Desertification and had also implemented a wide variety of bilateral official development assistance (ODA) projects.

20. His country welcomed the resolution recently adopted by the Economic and Social Council (E/2000/L.32*) establishing the international arrangement on forests, and hoped that the arrangement would achieve the objective stated in the resolution.

21. The entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol by 2002 was a basic tenet of his country's climate policy. In order for the Protocol to be ratified by all countries, it was indispensable to agree on concrete rules for the Kyoto mechanism, compliance, and sinks at the sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change which would be held in November. His country affirmed the

importance of assisting developing countries in the framework of joint efforts. At the sixth Conference, decisions were to be taken which should lead to effective ways of providing such assistance. For that purpose it was important to make mutual concessions and to act in the spirit of "learning by doing". What was necessary now was to ensure the entry into force of the Protocol. His country was continuing to exert its best efforts to establish a domestic policy framework which would enable it to achieve the target prescribed in the Protocol, in particular a 6 per cent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions during the first commitment period.

22. **Ms. Forde** (Barbados) speaking on behalf of the 14 Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that were members of the United Nations, associated herself fully with the statements made by Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by Samoa on behalf of the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS), and said that the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly had confirmed the extent to which the small island developing States had been implementing the Barbados Programme of Action, and had revealed the many severe challenges which constrained the development capacity of those States. The positive results that had been achieved were a matter of pride, but the partnership component, which was so essential to the implementation of the Programme of Action, had fallen short of expectations. In that context, the Member States of CARICOM were grateful for the contribution by donor countries and agencies and urged all their partners to revisit the commitments made in Barbados.

23. The CARICOM Member States were continuing their efforts to implement the thematic areas under the Barbados Programme of Action and 12 of them were involved in the Caribbean Planning for Adaptation to Global Climate Change. The project, which was scheduled for completion in 2001, had received the support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and was being implemented by the Organization of American States in conjunction with the Centre for Education and Development of the University of the West Indies. The CARICOM Member States were hoping to establish a permanent Caribbean centre to address the specific concerns of global climate change.

24. With respect to the security of energy supply, CARICOM had a general policy of exploiting all local natural resources and, in particular, was actively pursuing the development of solar and wind energy which would also ensure the appropriate adaptation of those technologies to local conditions. The Caribbean was in the process of designing a region-wide approach to remove those barriers that hindered the region's efforts to achieve self reliance in energy. That initiative was supported by the German Government, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and GEF. Discussions were in progress on the establishment of a global energy centre in the Caribbean geared towards training, research and demonstration.

25. The CARICOM secretariat had also established on a pilot basis a mechanism for capacity-building and more effective participation by Member States in the implementation of multilateral agreements and instruments.

26. With respect to the planning and management of water resources, the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute had organized a number of consultative meetings and training workshops to promote the implementation of integrated water resources management in CARICOM Member States. GEF was also supporting a project on integrated management of watersheds in coastal areas in Caribbean small island developing States.

27. The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) had been facilitating the movement of CARICOM Member States towards the enhanced development of their preparedness to meet natural disasters. Efforts were being made for that purpose to consolidate preparedness interventions into a comprehensive disaster management system.

28. The CARICOM Member States had also prepared national biodiversity strategies and action plans in fulfilment of the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and in pursuit of their objectives of sustainable management of their biological resources. Those national programmes would serve as a framework for a regional approach to the management of the region's biological and biodiversity resources. CARICOM was therefore grateful for the assistance provided by the Government of Canada to the Caribbean Fisheries Resources Assessment and Management Programme. It was also necessary, as a matter of urgency, to recognize the Caribbean as a special area in the context of sustainable development since its special characteristics merited special consideration and an innovative management approach

to embrace the concerns of all States bordering the Caribbean as well as those of the international community.

29. To increase implementation of the thematic areas of the Barbados Plan of Action, the CARICOM secretariat and the ECLAC regional office in Port-of-Spain were continuing to serve as the joint secretariat of the interim regional mechanism appointed by the bureau of the November 1997 Meeting of Caribbean Ministers of Environment. In anticipation of the Rio + 10 process, the CARICOM States were working towards the establishment of a permanent regional mechanism.

30. In view of the peculiar environmental and economic challenges facing small island developing States, it was necessary for the United Nations system, the multilateral lending agencies and the international community to move with urgency to strengthen the sustainable development prospects of that group of countries which required longer and more flexible transition arrangements, assistance to strengthen human and institutional capacity, appropriate technology transfer and support for their efforts to achieve diversification. CARICOM urged the United Nations to move speedily to complete and implement a vulnerability index for small island developing States. In that regard, the CARICOM States commended the efforts made by UNCTAD and welcomed the efforts of the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs and the Commission on Sustainable Development on behalf of small island developing States. The United Nations should further strengthen its unit dealing with small island developing States.

31. In the framework of the Barbados Plan of Action, the small island developing States had established an impressive transregional cooperation through the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and there was currently a significant sharing of information through the Small Islands Developing States Network (SIDSNET), particularly with respect to climate change.

32. The attainment of sustainable development for small island developing States required the full commitment of the international community to effect special measures to assist those countries to address the challenges of globalization, trade liberalization and economic and environmental vulnerabilities. The CARICOM Member States looked forward to the revitalization of the global partnership that had led to the commitments of the Barbados Programme of Action and to a resurgence of political will matched by adequate technical and financial resources for the Programme's full and effective implementation.

33. **Mr. Glenza** (Tunisia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. His Government attached great importance to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, since it believed that the control of desertification and mitigation of the effects of drought were essential for sustainable development, particularly agricultural and rural development. The universal nature of the Convention and the interest it had aroused in the international community were demonstrated by the increasing number of States which had acceded to it The submission of reports on the implementation of the Convention, including 40 reports which had already been submitted by the African countries, constituted an important stage in the implementation of the Convention.

34. The international community, and particularly the developed countries, should intensify their support initiatives, since the control of desertification was a crucial international undertaking. The global and integral dimension of environmental protection was totally incompatible with a selective approach to the problems. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification must therefore be placed on an equal footing with the other documents adopted in the spirit of the Earth Summit. Within the framework of the commitments they had undertaken for the benefit of the countries of the South, the developed countries should mobilize additional financial resources, facilitate the transfer of technology, experience and specialized knowledge, and support the efforts of the developing States parties, particularly the African countries, to formulate and apply their own strategies to combat desertification and drought. Tunisia was prepared to share the experience it had acquired in that sphere.

35. After many years of efforts, Tunisia had been successful in taking into account the human aspect of the problem of desertification and was giving due importance to socio-economic issues when analysing problems and seeking solutions. In addition, more was known about the mechanisms of erosion and desertification, and about socially acceptable and viable control techniques. It should be stressed,

however, that the developing countries could not carry out the tasks assigned to them unless they did so in a collective context which involved the international community as a whole.

36. The fact that over one billion people, mainly in the developing countries, lacked access to drinking water, and half of mankind did not have adequate sanitation facilities, along with the unplanned development of water resources, gave rise to deep concern. His delegation therefore supported the Secretary-General's call for public awareness and mobilization campaigns to bring home to people the extent and causes of current and impending water crisis.

37. Tunisia was making great efforts to ensure the increasing use of new and renewable sources of energy. In that context, it had undertaken a programme for the diversification of energy sources through the development of renewable sources which would help reduce production costs and protect the environment. Recently the first wind-powered electric power station had been inaugurated. When its 32 wind generators had been installed, wind intensity and velocity had been taken into account, as well as the proximity of a medium voltage electricity network. His delegation called for an increase in the transfer to the developing countries of technology and knowledge in relation to new and renewable sources of energy.

38. The small island developing States were facing major problems, in particular rising sea levels, integration into the world economy, the control of various types of pollution, and the intensification of natural disasters. The international community should therefore support the efforts of those States so as to ensure their development and their integration into the world economy, particularly through the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the recommendations emanating from the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly. The international community, and particularly the wealthy countries, should also intensify their efforts to help the developing countries preserve the environment, which in turn depended on development and sustained economic growth.

39. **Mr. Mózes** (Hungary) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement made by the European Union. Safeguarding the environment was a fundamental task for Governments. By definition, risks to the environment could not be tackled solely within a national framework; the countries concerned must take joint decisions and action. In that respect, he drew attention to a regional environmental initiative of his Government aimed at strengthening regional cooperation in environmental protection in central and eastern Europe, making the existing organizational structures more operational and more efficient, and creating an enforcement mechanism in the field of environmental security. Under that initiative, environmental security would not be viewed as an internal affair of a given country, and countries would increase the exchange of data and ensure transparency through the provision of specific information on environmental hazards, sources of potential danger, industrial technologies requiring increased monitoring, and State funding for environmental protection. The initiative also aimed to create institutional arrangements to help eliminate factors jeopardizing environmental security, in particular factors with a cross-border effect, and stressed that the installation of systems to predict environmental damage, a readiness to prevent or diminish such damage, and the assumption of State responsibility for damage, were prerequisites for environmental cooperation among the countries of the region.

40. In view of the specific conditions of the central and eastern European region, air and water pollution were the prime threat to human health and the ecosystem of the countries of the region. His Government's initiative stemmed from the various environmental problems encountered by Hungary and other countries in a very specific geographical region which was also undergoing an immensely complex transition. Protection of the environment therefore went well beyond purely ecological considerations. Furthermore, the prospects of accession to the European Union were playing a catalytic role in the environmental sphere, in view of the strict standards established by the European Union. Hungary called on the various subregional, regional and international organizations and institutions to support that regional environmental initiative and give further momentum to common efforts to preserve the natural habitat.

41. **Mr. Ainchil** (Argentina) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made at the 18th meeting by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China with regard to item 95 (b) entitled "Convention on Biological Diversity", and the

statement made on the same topic by the representative of Colombia on behalf of the Rio Group.

42. Argentina recognized the difficulties involved in the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, especially in relation to the issues which were of the greatest concern to the developing countries, the countries which possessed the greatest biodiversity. In assessing the implementation of the Convention, Argentina stressed the importance of the work to be carried out by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in preparing for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties. If that meeting was to be successful, specific agreements would have to be reached on the effective implementation of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing House. That would help generate greater confidence between exporters and importers of living modified organisms for human and animal consumption and for processing. The process of identification of shipments of such organisms should lead to a non-bureaucratic and transparent process which would eliminate all barriers to world trade in such organisms, except strictly technical barriers.

43. In order to progress in achieving the objectives of the sustainable use of biodiversity, the facilitating of access to genetic resources, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of resources, greater political will was needed on the part of the developed countries. On the question of access to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, Argentina supported the application of the multilateral system of access, which was the subject of negotiations under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), with a view to harmonizing the International Undertaking with the Convention on Biological Diversity. However, its support for that process did not mean that Argentina was satisfied with the slow speed at which the developed countries were applying the procedures to facilitate access to other genetic resources within the bilateral system, as established in the Convention on Biological Diversity. Furthermore, the agreements on the development of biological resources drawn up between some countries, including Argentina and other neighbouring countries, were not sufficient. Unless progress was made on that issue, it was likely that the difficulties of acceding to genetic resources would increase, particularly resources destined for pharmacological use. For that reason, efforts must be stepped up to implement the provisions of article 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity and other related articles, article 16, concerning access to and transfer of technology, and article 8 (j) concerning the need to respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities. It was also particularly important to apply the provisions of article 7, concerning the identification and monitoring of components of biological diversity, since without an inventory of such resources, it would be very difficult to facilitate access to unknown resources.

44. Lastly, and even though over 170 countries had acceded to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Argentina called upon the most technologically advanced countries which were not yet parties to the Convention to ratify it.

Agenda item 118: Programme planning (A/55/6, A/55/16 and A/C.2/55/5)

45. **The Chairman** reminded delegations that they could submit written comments for transmittal to the Fifth Committee.

Other matters

46. **The Chairman** announced that the following countries had become sponsors of draft resolution A/C.2/55/L.4 entitled "Integration of the economies in transition into the world economy": Austria, Canada, Fiji, France, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

47. **Mr. Bahaitham** (Saudi Arabia) said that his delegation wished to become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.2/55/L.7 entitled "Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources".

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.